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Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 NEA-11 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15
CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 DODE-00 L-03 EB-08 HA-05
EUR-12 /087 W
----------040738 080939Z /21/42L
R 061034Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7290
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KHARTOUM 2070

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT)

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SU, PEPR, XF
SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH SADIQ AL-MAHDI

REF: STATE 086710

1. I TOOK TEA WITH SADIQ AL-MAHDI LAST EVENING MAY 5 AT HIS HOUSE IN OMDURMAN. NO ONE ELSE WAS PRESENT AND CONVERSATION LASTED ABOUT NINETY MINUTES.

2. IT BECAME OBVIOUS FROM THE OUTSET THAT SADIQ WANTED TO KEEP THE CONVERSATION ON VERY HIGH GROUND. I THOUGHT IT BEST, AT THIS FIRST, GET-ACQUAINTED MEETING TO OBLIGE.

3. I OPENED CONVERSATION BY SAYING I HAD READ THE ARTICLES SADIQ HAD PUBLISHED LAST SUMMER. IF FELT THAT HE WAS ACTING ON OUTMODED ASSUMPTIONS IN HIS APPRAISAL OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA. I GAVE A BRIEF REVIEW OF OUR OBJECTIVES IN THESE AREAS.
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I POINTED OUT THAT IN THE PAST IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN SAID THAT THE USG CONSIDERED ITS RELATIONS WITH SUDAN IN THE LIGHT OF OUR RELATIONS WITH EGYPT. THUS, FOR EXAMPLE, IN THE LATE 50'S AND EARLY 60'S, WE HAD SPONSORED A MAJOR ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IN SUDAN TO STRENGTHEN SUDANESE RESISTANCE TO NASSER'S EXPANSIONIST PLANS. NOW, HOWEVER, THE USG LOOKED AT THE SUDAN IN AND OF

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ITSELF. WE BELIEVED THE COUNTRY HAD GREAT ECONOMIC
POTENTIAL AND A MAJOR ROLE TO PLAY AS A CONSTRUCTIVE
AND STABILIZING FORCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND IN AFRICA.

4. SADIQ WELCOMED THIS STATEMENT AND SPOKE AT SOME
LENGTH ABOUT HIS PERCEPTION OF SUDAN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH
EGYPT. HE STRESSED THE RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO PEOPLES. HE FELT THAT THE
SUDANESE HAD A DISTINCTIVE NATIONAL IDENTITY. SUDANESE
SOCIETY CONTAINED BOTH ELEMENTS OF RELIGIOUS TRADITION
(ENABLING SUDANESE TO HAVE CLOSE RELATIONS WITH
TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES OF ARABIAN PENINSULA) AND FORCES OF
MODERNIZATION. THEREFORE, SUDAN HAD A UNIQUE BRIDGING
ROLE TO PLAY, BOTH BETWEEN THE ARABS AND BLACK AFRICA
AND EVEN BETWEEN MASHRIQ AND MAGHREB IN ARAB WORLD.

5. I GAVE HIM MY VEST POCKET ANALYSIS OF SUDAN-EGYPT
RELATIONSHIP (I.E. TOTAL RUPTURE OF RELATIONS EQUALS
ZERO, TOTAL INTEGRATION EQUALS TEN) AND SAID IT SEEMED
TO ME THAT THINGS WENT BEST FOR ALL CONCERNED WHEN
RELATIONSHIP STOOD BETWEEN POINTS FIVE AND SIX.
SADIQ CHUCKLED AND SAID HE WAS WILLING TO GO UP TO
A POINT BETWEEN SEVEN AND EIGHT.

6. SADIQ SAID HE BELIEVED THAT THERE WAS STILL SOME
HOPE OF TURNING QADDAFI INTO RESPONSIBLE ARAB LEADER.
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QADDAFI, HE SAID, HAD BEEN THOROUGHLY MISLED BY NASSER.
NASSER HAD TOLD QADDAFI THAT HE WAS THE RIGHTFUL HEIR
TO LEADERSHIP OF THE ARAB REVOLTUION. NASSER HAD ALSO
MADE EXTREMELY DEROGATORY REMARKS ABOUT SADAT TO QADDAFI.

7. SADIQ DID NOT THINK THAT NIMEIRI'S EFFORTS TO RECONCILE
HAFEZ AL ASSAD AND SADATWLOULD SUCCEED. SADIQ SAID
AL ASSAD WAS RIGHT, SADAT'S VISIT TO ISRAEL HAD BEEN A
GREAT MISTAKE. I DISAGREED WITH HIM ON THIS, POINTING
OUT THE PROFOUND EFFECT SADAT'S TRIP HAD HAD ON AMERICAN
PUBLIC OPINION. SADIQ SEEMED TO ACCEPT THIS.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 KHARTOUM 2070

8. SADIQ SAID THE RELEASE FROM PRISON OF SUDANESE COMMUNISTS DID NOT WORRY HIM. MANY OF THEM WERE GIFTED PEOPLE WHO COULD MAKE A REAL CONTRIBUTION TO SUDANESE DEVELOPMENT. HE FELT COMMUNISM WOULD NEVER SUCEED IN SUDAN NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF THE ISLAMIC FACTOR, BUT ALSO BECAUSE THE OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS TO BRING ABOUT COMMUNISM DID NOT EXIST. SUDANESE SOCIETY WAS CLASSLESS IN THAT IT WAS HIGHLY MOBILE. THANKS TO THE TRADITIONS ESTABLISHED BY THE MAHDI AND ENDORSED BY THE BRITISH, THERE WAS NO LANDED ARISTOCRACY. THERE WAS LAND AVAILABLE FOR ANYONE WHO WISHED TO WORK IT. I POINTED OUT THAT SUDANESE COMMUNISTS AND THEIR SOVIET FRIENDS HAD BEEN PRETTY HEAVY-HANDED IN 1971. SADIQ AGREED.

9. I SAID MY EXPERIENCES IN BOTH EGYPT AND TURKEY HAD THOROUGHLY DISILLUSIONED ME ABOUT STATE-RUN ENTERPRISES. SADIQ AGREED THEY HAD THEIR SHORTCOMINGS. HE SAID, HOWEVER, SUDANESE LACKED ENTREPRENEURS AND THUS COULD NOT, AS INDIVIDUALS, MAKE THEIR WAY THROUGH THE JUNGLE OF INTERNATIONAL ECONOMY OR COPE WITH BIG MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS. I MENTIONED A MUTUAL SUDANESE FRIEND
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AND SAID I THOUGHT HE WAS A MOST IMPRESSIVE ENTREPRENEUR. SADIQ SAID THAT THERE WEREN'T ENOUGH PEOPLE LIKE HIM.

10. THE ONE CLEAR AND SPECIFIC REQUEST THAT SADIQ MADE OF ME WAS THAT THE USG GIVE SOME HELP, ALONG WITH OTHERS, TO ENABLE THE SUDAN TO WEATHER ITS CURRENT BALANCE OF PAYMENTS CRISIS.

1. WE PARTED ON VERY WARM TERMS ON THE UNDER-STANDING THAT WE WOULD MEET PERIODICALLY IN THE FUTURE.

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SADIQ GAVE ME COPIES OF HIS TWO MOST RECENT BOOKS.

12. COMMENT: I CAME AWAY FROM THIS MEETING WITH THE CONVICTION THAT SADIQ MEANS IT WHEN HE SAYS HE IS GOING TO STAND ALOOF FROM THE GOVERNMENT FOR A WHILE. HE OBVIOUSLY BELIEVES, I THINK PROBABLY RIGHTLY, THAT THE VERY AMBIGUITY OF HIS PRESENT POSITION ADDS TO HIS INFLUENCE IN THE SUDAN AND IN THE OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES. HE IS A VERY ATTRACTIVE PERSON WITH CONSIDERABLE CHARISMA. FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN MY SUDANESE DRIVER AND BODYGUARD TAKE ME TO SEE NIMEIRI, IT IS A PRETTY ROUTINE HO-HUM OPERATION, AS FAR AS THEY ARE CONCERNED. THEY WERE BOTH QUITE EXCITED ABOUT LAST NIGHT'S VISIT. WHEN SADIQ ESCORTED ME TO MY CAR AND GREETED THEM, IT WAS AS THOUGH THEY HAD BEEN PERSONALLY BLESSED BY THE POPE.
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TAGS: PINT, PEPR, SU, XF, (AL-MAHDI, SADIQ), (BURGES, DONALD CLAYTON)
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